Rare Animals of Louisiana

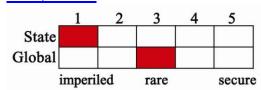




Loggerhead Sea Turtle

Caretta caretta

Rarity Rank: S1/G3





Delaware Game & Fish Commission

Identification:

- Reddish—brown carapace and yellowish plastron
- Other diagnostic features include 5 or more costal scutes, with the first one always touching the nuchal
- Large, block like head
- The carapace length of full-grown adults averages about 1.1 m (43.3 in) with a maximum measured length of 1.2 m (47.2 in)
- Adults may weigh more than 227 kg (500 lb)

Habitat:

- Marine open deep water, marine open shallow water (especially with submerged seagrass beds, salt marshes, bays, tidal passes, and coastal dunes (nesting))
- Loggerheads generally inhabit warm water over the continental shelf and regularly enter marshes, estuaries and coastal rivers

Food habits:

Omnivorous, feeding on aquatic plants, crustaceans, mollusks, jellyfish, squid, sea urchins and fish

Range:

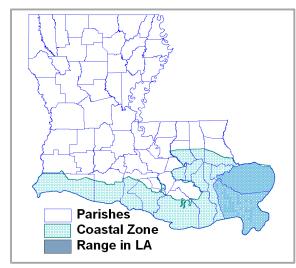
- Primarily found in the warm water of the Atlantic basin but may range as far north as Canada or as far south as Argentina
- In Louisiana, this species has been found throughout the coastal region, but nesting has only been recorded on the Chandeleur Islands

Reproduction:

- Ideal nesting habitat is provided by well—drained dunes with clean sand and scattered grassy vegetation
- Females lay an average of 2 clutches (range 1-7) of 60-80 eggs per season
- Most females nest on 2 year or 3 year intervals
- Nesting in Louisiana usually occurs between May and August, with a peak in late June

Threats:

- Erosion of barrier islands on which the species nests
- Take of eggs, young, and adult turtles as food for people
- Incidental take of turtles by fishing and shrimping gear



Range based on occurrences in Natural Heritage database

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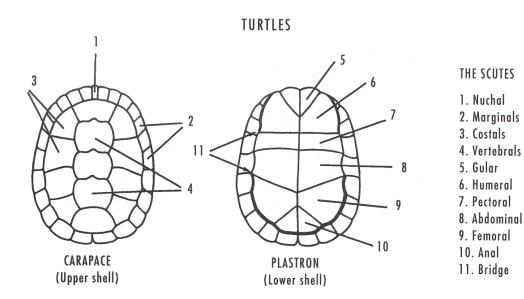
Coastal land loss

Beneficial Management Practices:

- Protection of females, eggs and hatchlings on breeding beaches
- Use of turtle exclusion devices (TEDS) on shrimp trawls
- Reduced trawling time for shrimping

LA River Basins:

Pontchartrain, Mississippi, Barataria



Drawing from:

A Field Guide to Reptiles and Amphibians of Eastern and Central North America. Third Edition, Expanded. Figure 23